



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

USAID Assistant Administrator Michael Hess Visits Ethiopia to Assess Humanitarian Crisis

Mr. Michael Hess, Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the lead U.S. Government (USG) agency for international humanitarian assistance, is visiting Ethiopia April 15-20. The USG remains concerned about the acute humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa, where drought is affecting as many as 16 million people this year. In particular, 7-8 million pastoralist herders and farmers living in northeastern Kenya, southern Somalia, southern Ethiopia, and also Djibouti are facing severe shortages of water and food.



Mr. Michael Hess
Assistant Administrator
for the USAID

In Ethiopia, Mr. Hess will assess emergency needs and become familiar with the local and international response in Ethiopia to date. He will meet with

UN Country Team members, government officials and other USAID partners working on the drought response and humanitarian needs. Mr. Hess will also visit sites in Butajira and Gode focusing on community-based therapeutic care, food security and household livelihood activities.

Prior to traveling to Ethiopia, Mr. Hess visited Kenya and Djibouti. This region has experienced several consecutive seasons of failed rains and poor harvests, leaving residents without the means to cope. The USG is preparing for a

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Community Health Agent Improves Women's Lives

Hulet Eju Enessie woreda (district) is a densely populated area in Amhara Region of Ethiopia with 192 persons per square kilometer. Until 2003 there was no reproductive health or family planning information available to its population.

Through a USAID-funded community-based inte-

grated primary health care (PHC) and reproductive health (RH) program implemented by Pathfinder International and local partner Ethiopia Aid, dramatic change is taking place. The program aims to improve maternal and child health, promote immunization, prevent HIV/AIDS and malaria transmission, and change be-

havior regarding family planning and harmful practices like early marriage through active involvement of the community and the employment of community-based reproductive health (CBRH) agents. A recently-hired CBRH agent, Ato Terefe Emirie received training under

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USAID Assistant Administrator Michael Hess Visits Ethiopia . . .

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potential worsening of the crisis as spring rains in the region are not expected to be sufficient to provide relief. Conflict and insecurity also complicate humanitarian access.

The USG has provided more than \$150 million in emergency humanitarian assistance since November

2005 in order to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable populations of the region. This assistance includes food aid, emergency water and sanitation interventions, health and nutrition activities, and livelihood support. In addition to the significant on-going development assistance programs in the region, USAID will provide approximately \$7 million to help

increase sustainable sources of clean water.

The United States calls upon other donor nations as well as the Governments of Kenya and Ethiopia to increase their efforts to prevent another catastrophic famine in the Horn of Africa. ♦

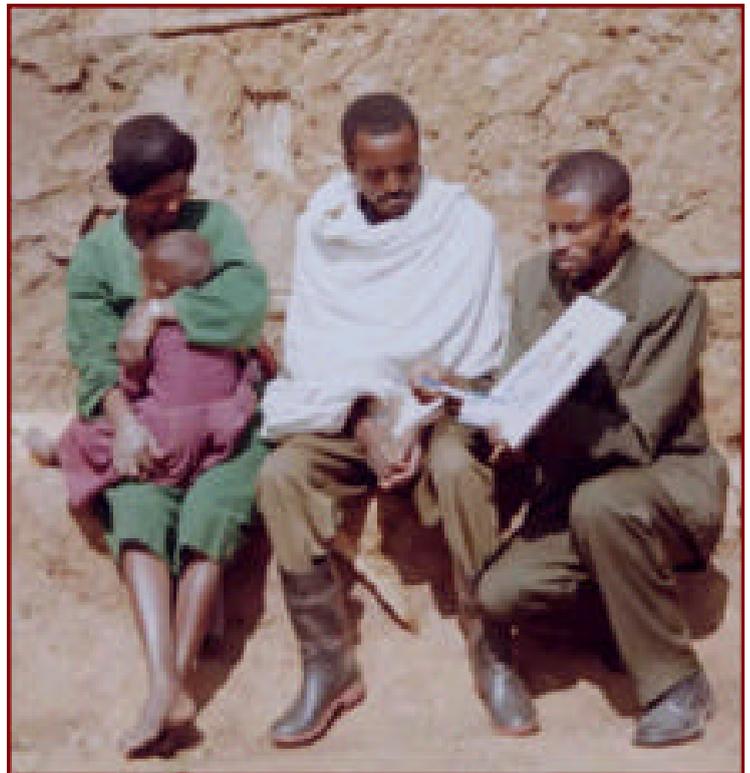
Community Health Agent Improves Women's Lives . . .

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the Ethiopian Ministry of Health's National Curriculum for CBRH agents. He participated in a survey of the community to map and register the households he was to serve. He counsels families on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and refers clients to the health center for voluntary testing. He assists families in getting their children vaccinated and encourages pregnant women to be vaccinated for tetanus toxoid. Malaria is endemic in this area of Ethiopia and a major cause of death; Ato Terefe identified and advised on the draining of local mosquito breeding sites. After attending a sanitation and environmental hygiene course, he applied that knowledge to raise sanitation in his community of 1325 households. His efforts resulted in 866 pit latrines being constructed, leading to lower rates of dysentery and other preventable diseases caused by poor sanitation.

Ato Terefe ensures that his clients receive their family planning needs in a timely manner and has become a role model to the men in his community, reducing male resistance to family planning. He has engaged the participation of religious leaders to educate the community on eliminating harmful traditional practices, promoting family planning, and preventing HIV/AIDS.

USAID's funding to this program has led to positive change in Ethiopia's reproductive health statistics—with the contraceptive prevalence rate increasing from 8.1 to 21 percent in program areas. ♦



"I mobilized the wives of the district development committee to serve as role models to demonstrate the acceptance of family planning to the rest of the community."

— Ato Terefe Emirie, aged 37, of East Gojam Zone in Amhara Region of Ethiopia

Increased Trade Key to African Development, U.S. Official Says

There is a "broad consensus" among African officials and the global community that increased trade is key to boosting African economic growth and development and alleviating poverty on the continent, Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Karan Bhatia told the African Union Trade Ministerial in Nairobi, Kenya, April 14.

This consensus, Bhatia said, is reflected in the work of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Group of Eight industrialized nations (G8), as well as in the World Trade Organization negotiations informally known as the Doha Round.

"The challenge before us," Bhatia told the ministers, "is to make the most of this moment: to secure ambitious results from the Doha Round that will open up new opportunities for Africa, and to assist your countries in undertaking the reforms and building the trading capacity that will help them to grasp these opportunities."

Bhatia also transmitted warm greetings to the officials from President Bush and from U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman, who was unable to attend the meeting.

"I do not believe any U.S. president has been a more forceful and stronger advocate for Africa than George W. Bush," Bhatia said. "Under his administration, the United States has tripled aid to Africa and has committed now to doubling development assistance again by 2010.

"He has also launched such historic initiatives as the Millennium Challenge Account and the Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief, and has been a leader in securing international debt relief."



Karan Bhatia
Deputy U.S. Trade Representative

Bhatia pointed to AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, as the center of U.S. efforts to increase trade with the continent. More than 98 percent of African imports now enter the United States duty-free under AGOA, he said, and the law has helped to create tens of thousands of jobs in Africa.

But the future of intensified U.S.-Africa trade relationships lies not in one-way preferences, he said, but in two-way commitments such as free-trade agreements, bilateral investment treaties and trade and investment framework agreements. He said the United States will be working with key African

partners to explore the possibility of entering into such agreements.

He also pointed to trade capacity-building assistance -- or Aid for Trade -- as "an integral element" of U.S. efforts to support African trade with global partners. U.S. assistance in this effort will double from the current \$1.3 billion to \$2.7 billion worldwide by 2010, and African countries will receive a significant share of those funds, he said.

Looking ahead to the Doha negotiations, Bhatia said, "A robust outcome to the Doha Round, with market-opening at its core, would be a major boost to African countries' ability to use trade to bolster development and tackle poverty."

A successful conclusion to Doha, he said, would be "the greatest single potential welfare-enhancing opportunity that the United States, Africa, and the rest of the world have."

For additional information on U.S. trade and development policies, see Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html), USA and the WTO (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/WTO.html), U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html) and Group of 8 (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/group_of_8.html).

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

African Union Called Good Partner to United States on Sudan

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick welcomed the chairman of the African Union Commission, Mali's President Alpha Oumar Konare, to the State Department April 14 and commended the African Union (AU) for being a good partner with the United States and for playing a "very fundamental role" in Sudan.

Speaking to reporters before their meeting, Zoellick said the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) troops have been acting with "great courage" and doing a tremendous job in the troubled Darfur region. Zoellick said he has visited most of the AMIS units and thus knows their capabilities and commitment to their mission firsthand.

Additionally, the deputy secretary also praised former Tanzanian Prime Minister Salim Ahmed Salim for playing a critical role in the AU-mediated peace talks on Darfur now being held in Abuja, Nigeria.

"I appreciate the chance to meet with President Konare," Zoellick told reporters, "so we can talk about ways to strengthen the AMIS mission. We want to follow up on the African Union's Peace and Security Council decision of March about transitioning to a U.N. force," he said.

Both the AU and the United Nations have talked about ways to get help from other regional organizations to strengthen their capability to deal with the tragedy and help the people in Darfur, he added.

Zoellick said "the humanitarian

and security operations can only be a holding action." For that reason, he said, "we must work for this peace agreement in Abuja. ... We've both been in touch with officials in Khartoum [Sudan], as well as the rebels on trying to do

trips to Sudan and for presenting an accurate view of the work that has been done by African Union forces there.

"We think it is an African responsibility that we will take and con-



Robert B. Zoellick
Deputy Secretary of State

Alpha Oumar Konare
Chairman of the African Union

that."

The U.S. official also said he was interested in getting Konare's perspective on the recent events in Chad, a country the African leader recently visited.

"I want to get his perspective on what we can try to do to stop any danger to the government, but also urge the government to move forward with an inclusive political process," Zoellick said.

In his comments, Konare thanked Zoellick and the American team that has been working "side by side" with the African Union on Sudan.

Konare, whose remarks were translated into English, also praised Zoellick for making several

trips to Sudan and for presenting an accurate view of the work that has been done by African Union forces there.

"We think it is an African responsibility that we will take and continue to work. We need to quickly reach an agreement, a political settlement in Abuja," Konare said.

He called on those in Sudan on the government side and the rebel side to "really commit to this end. We must at all prices avoid any possible influence from the actual situation in Chad on the situation in Sudan," he added. The African leader also said the AU is "totally available" to continue to work for progress in this area because Darfur and Sudan are "very important. The whole continent of Africa is really involved in this."

For more information, see Africa (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/>) and Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>). ♦

Bush Praises Ghanaian President for Honesty, Economic Reforms

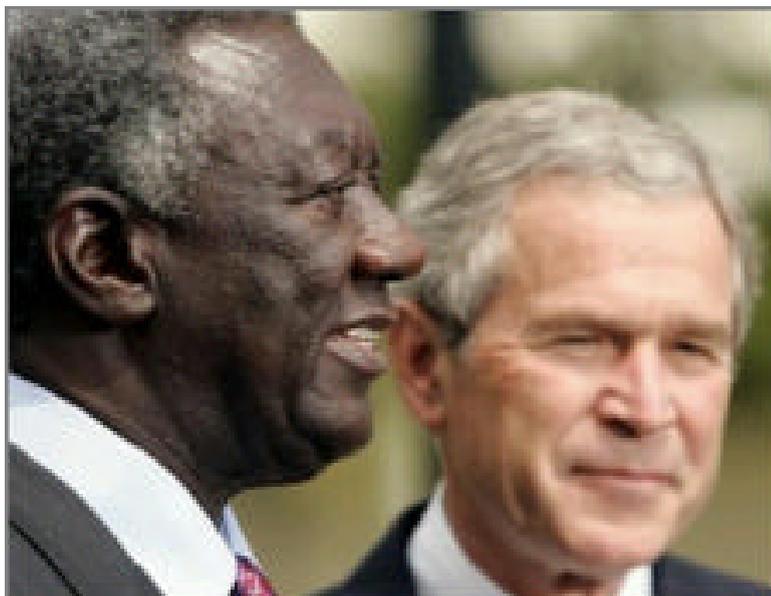
President Bush said Ghana's president, John Kufuor, "has done a fantastic job" for his country, specifically mentioning that Kufuor has kept his promises to his people to bring honesty to the government and to create a stable economic platform.

Speaking with Kufuor at the White House April 12, Bush said

Kufuor thanked Bush "for understanding Africa," and specifically for his efforts and \$15 million in funding targeted to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa, "some of which has helped to, in a way, save and also make life easier over 400,000 afflicted people." He said "everything [is] going to plan" in terms of the MCA, and that the

the first lady promoted education, including supplying textbooks and materials for children and helping to educate girls. "I believe this is a President that is helping Africa help itself. And we count on your support," Kufuor told Bush.

For additional information, see Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html).



President Bush talks to reporters with Ghana's President John Kufuor outside the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, April 12, 2006. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

that U.S. confidence in Ghana and its leadership has resulted in U.S. funding and cooperation with Ghana through the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), the competitive bilateral development fund designed to promote economic growth.

"It's a statement of our respect, and it's a statement of our appreciation for somebody who is willing to invest in his people, who is willing to fight corruption, who is willing to help a market economy grow," Bush said.

United States and Ghana plan to sign a compact by July. "That would enable Ghana to pursue modernized agriculture," he said.

"These projects that would free hundreds of millions of dollars to help modernize our agriculture would affect as many as 3 million people, help reduce poverty, and also push growth for the economy," Kufuor said.

The Ghanaian leader also mentioned the recent visit by Laura Bush to his country. On that visit,

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT BUSH

PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. President, welcome. It's good to have you back. We just had a wonderful discussion about our bilateral relations, and a great discussion about the world. I really enjoy talking to a man of vision and strength and character. President Kufuor has done a fantastic job for Ghana. He's told the people of his country he'd bring honesty to government, and he has. He told the people of his country that he would work to create a stable economic platform for -- and he has done that, as well. And he's a man of peace. He cares deeply about peace in the region.

As a result of his leadership and our confidence in his government, we're very happy to work with his country to promote what we've called the Millennium Challenge Account. It's a statement of our respect, and it's a statement for our appreciation for somebody who is willing to invest in his people, is willing to fight corruption, who is willing to help a market economy grow.

Mr. President, congratulations on your record of leadership. Thank you for being a man of peace. Thank you for coming to Washington. ♦

U.S. Agency To Provide Djibouti \$1.1 Million in Drought Aid

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will provide \$1.1 million to the World Food Program for its drought emergency operations in Djibouti, USAID announced in a press release April 12.

According to the press release, this assistance will provide over 2,000 metric tons in food commodities to the country. Since October 2005, USAID has contributed \$800,000 in emergency humanitarian food assistance to Djibouti.

USAID called on donor governments to act quickly "to help alleviate the current suffering and to help prevent human catastrophe in the Horn of Africa." The drought in the region is particularly serious for about 7 million farmers and herders in northeastern Kenya, southern Somalia, southern Ethiopia and parts of Djibouti, according to the agency. People in these areas urgently need both food assistance and non-food assistance such as medicines, immunizations, water-well rehabilitation and emergency livestock interventions.

For more information on U.S. foreign policy, see U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html) and Humanitarian Assistance and Refugees (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/refugees.html).

Additional information (http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/djibouti/

index.html) on USAID programs in Djibouti is available on the USAID Web site.

Following is the text of the press release:

USAID Provides Drought Assistance to Djibouti



April 12, 2006
Press Office: 202-712-4320
Public Information: 202-712-4810
www.usaid.gov

DJIBOUTI - Today, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced that it will provide \$1.1 million to the World Food Program (WFP) for their drought emergency operations in Djibouti. This assistance will provide over 2,000 Metric Tons (MT) in food commodities to the country. Since October 2005, USAID has contributed \$800,000 in emergency humanitarian food assistance to Djibouti.

The pastoral drought within the Greater Horn of Africa is particularly serious for approximately 7

million farmers and herders found in an arid region which connects Northeastern Kenya, Southern Somalia, Southern Ethiopia and parts of Djibouti. In Djibouti, drought conditions over the past few years have spread malnutrition and a significant number of livestock have died.

The U.S. Government commends the Government of Djibouti for their assistance in the delivery of aid to the affected populations.

We urge other donor governments to act quickly to help alleviate the current suffering and to help prevent human catastrophe in the Horn of Africa. Both food assistance and non-food assistance (medicines, immunizations, water well rehabilitation and emergency livestock interventions) are urgently required.

USAID will continue to monitor the situation in Djibouti and the region and will provide updates as necessary.

For more information about the U.S. Agency for International Development, visit our Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/horn/

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Millennium Challenge Corporation Helps Zambia Fight Corruption

Washington -- The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has approved a two-year, \$24.3 million Threshold Program with Zambia to fight corruption and improve government effectiveness, the corporation's board of directors announced April 17.

The program will employ a three-pronged strategy focused on preventing corruption in targeted government institutions, improving public service delivery to the private sector and improving border management of trade, an MCC press release said.

"Congratulations to the people and government of Zambia for their ambitious program to root out corruption and create a more conducive climate for investment," Millennium Challenge Corporation Chief Executive Officer John Danilovich said in the release. "I applaud the leadership of President [Levy Patrick] Mwanawasa for his bold action in implementing a 'zero tolerance for corruption' policy."

Danilovich also gave special thanks to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and to U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Carmen Martinez and her staff.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is a U.S. government agency designed to work with some of the poorest countries in the world, based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, eco-

nomie freedom and investments in people that promote economic growth and poverty elimination.

MCC's Threshold Program is designed to assist countries that are on the "threshold" of Millennium



Zambian art against corruption

Challenge Account (MCA) eligibility for "compacts" with the United States for financial assistance to support policies and programs that advance their progress toward development.

Threshold Program assistance is used to help countries address the specific policy weaknesses indicated by the country's scores on 16 policy indicators in three categories: ruling justly, investing in people and encouraging economic freedom.

The policy indicators -- derived from respected international institutions and national data -- are central to the criteria for MCA eligibility. Each indicator was se-

lected based on its relationship to growth and poverty reduction, the number of countries it covers, its transparency and availability, its analytical rigor and its objectivity.

The MCC's Threshold Program assistance totals approximately \$118 million in six countries: Burkina Faso, Malawi, Tanzania, Albania, Paraguay and Zambia.

The corporation has signed compacts totaling more than \$1.5 billion with eight countries: Madagascar, Cape Verde, Honduras, Nicaragua, Georgia, Benin, Vanuatu and Armenia. The MCC also is working with other eligible countries to help them develop compacts.

More information about Zambia's Threshold Program is available in a fact sheet (http://www.mca.gov/public_affairs/fact_sheets/zambia_tp_fact_sheet.shtml) on the MCC Web site.

For additional information, see Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html).

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Private Donors Boosting U.S. Aid Effectiveness, Official Says

By Kathryn McConnell
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A four-year-old U.S. program that leverages official foreign aid with private sector resources is bringing an increasing amount of investment and expertise to developing countries, says a top official of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Since 2001, through its Global Development Alliance (GDA), USAID has built 400 partnerships with companies, foundations, diaspora groups and faith-based organizations to help reduce poverty and spur economic growth in poor countries, said Daniel Runde, GDA director.

Yet, he said, more such partnerships are needed.

Runde, briefing reporters April 18 at the State Department's Foreign Press Center, cited examples of successful public-private partnerships.

One, involving USAID, the government of Egypt and the company that produces Sesame Street (a popular children's educational television program in the United

States), is working to bring a local version of Sesame Street into homes throughout Egypt so the country's young can learn to read and to master other life skills in a fun, creative manner. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Apr/06-727091.html>).

In Rwanda, the U.S.-based coffee company Starbucks Corporation, USAID and local government are cooperating to develop the country's coffee growing industry. Rwanda now produces high-quality coffee sold in thousands of stores in the United States, Runde said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2006/Apr/11-272691.html>).

In the Philippines, a partnership is helping to bring solar-generated electricity to rural areas. Another is helping Mali expand its sugar industry so it can benefit from more exports and create more agricultural jobs, he said.

Many of these partnerships also focus on helping farmers learn more about other countries' food quality and packaging standards so they can sell more of their products to international buyers, Runde said.

In addition, they focus on helping projects become sustainable so recipient countries do not have to rely on foreign aid.

Overall, U.S. foreign aid has tripled since 2000 to \$27.5 billion in 2005, Runde said.

More information (http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_partnerships/gda/) about the Global Development Alliance is available on the USAID Web site.

See also "U.S. Companies Step Up the Business of Giving Overseas" ([http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=April&x=20060411182239berekellek0.1802027&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html?%19%25a%08???????\)](http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=April&x=20060411182239berekellek0.1802027&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html?%19%25a%08???????)) and Partnership for a Better Life (<http://usinfo.state.gov/partnerships/index.html>).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Bush Announces Changes for Trade Representative, Budget Director

By Bruce Odessey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush has named U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman to serve as his budget director and Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab to replace Portman.

The president announced the nominations, which are subject to Senate approval, at the White House April 18.

The changes come at a time of transition at the White House and just ahead of a crucial deadline in long-stalled World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations.

Schwab, speaking at the White House, said that completion of those negotiations remains a high priority.

"This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to generate global economic growth and to lift millions out of poverty," Schwab said, "and it will continue to be a top priority for this administration."

After only 11 months at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), Portman would replace Joshua Bolten as director of the Office of Management and Budget. Bolten has just taken the position of the president's chief of staff. The president has hinted that other personnel changes are coming.

After only five months as deputy, Schwab would take the lead at USTR. She faces an ambitious agenda not only in trying to complete the WTO negotiations, formally called the Doha Development

Agenda, but also in advancing 14 free-trade agreement (FTA) negotiations, including major ones with South Korea and Malaysia, as well as in pressing for congressional approval of FTAs already signed.

After having missed every crucial deadline since the Doha round was launched in 2001, negotiators

Crowder, chief U.S. agricultural negotiator, said in April 12 remarks.

The WTO's goal is to complete the Doha round by the end of 2006. Any agreement that might be reached later would have little chance for consideration by Congress before President Bush's



President George Bush announces the nomination of Rob Portman as Director of the Office of Management and Budget and Susan Schwab as the U.S. Trade Representative in the Rose Garden Tuesday, April 18, 2006. White House photo by Paul Morse

have expressed serious doubts that they will meet the next one, April 30. On that day the WTO parties are supposed to agree on the modalities -- specific formulas and time frames -- for reducing tariffs and subsidies in agricultural trade and tariffs in industrial goods trade.

"Clearly, we are concerned about the April 30 deadline -- whether or not we will meet that," Richard T.

trade promotion authority (TPA) expires in July 2007. Under TPA, Congress restricts itself only to approve or reject a negotiated trade agreement, within strict time limits and without amendments.

Congress has become increasingly bitterly divided over trade. Portman, a Republican from Ohio, served 12 years in the House of Representatives, where

(Continued on page 13)

Muslim Outreach Key for Promoting Understanding, Integration

By Sara Feuerstein
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- "The [American] Muslim community realizes today they are part of the fabric of society, and they have a responsibility and opportunity to bridge the gap between the two cultures," said Khalil Jassemm in an April 11 webchat.

Jassemm serves as chief executive officer of the nonprofit, non-governmental organization Life for Relief and Development (LIFE), which has provided more than \$100 million in humanitarian assistance to ten countries around the world.

Jassemm said the attacks of September 11, 2001, served as a "wake-up call" for American Muslims. The subsequent war in Iraq and War on Terror "forced them to become more proactive, and do more outreach in the community, educate, and explain to the general public what Islam is really about," he said.

He estimated that 6 million to 8 million Muslims reside in the United States, and noted that every city with a population of more than 30,000 has a mosque or place to pray.

Negative media perception "is probably the biggest challenge facing Muslims today," Jassemm said. "Only through hard work, positive engagement, a good outreach plan, and help from good citizens, this problem can be overcome."

For example, even though many non-Muslims stereotype the Muslim world as harboring negative feelings toward Americans,

Jassemm said, "I don't think Muslims hate the U.S. at all. Islam never preaches hate against anyone." He pointed out that no single *aya* (verse) in the Quran uses the word "hate."

Although some Muslims may disagree with certain U.S. policies, government policy is only "one element of the relationship" -- with factors such as culture, economy, and human interaction also serving to shape Muslim views about America and Americans, he said.

Outreach is necessary on both sides because many Muslims around the world foster misconceptions about Americans as well, Jassemm added.

Jassemm said he considers American society quite welcoming to both Muslims, and has found that "the average American citizen is very open-minded and fair and willing to listen and engage in positive dialogue."

U.S. law promotes discussion and can "encourage the citizens to express their views and feelings peacefully and within the law. The U.S. Constitution guarantees this right," Jassemm said. He cited government outreach as a "very critical tool" in helping Muslims "face challenges and secure their future" in America.

For Muslims in America, Jassemm credited the combination of American laws and values as helping to expedite the otherwise "long gradual process" of integration. He describes Muslim integration in American society as "smooth and without any major obstacles."

"American Muslims are among the most educated of American

society. They contribute in every element and aspect of American life. No, they are not harassed by the police," he told one of his correspondents during the webchat.

Jassemm attributed Muslims' success in America to the country's foundation on the rule of law and its celebration of the work ethic. "There are no limits on success level. Your nationality and background are irrelevant. Islam strongly emphasizes self-discipline, and America provides endless opportunities."

Interfaith efforts and religious tolerance also play a role facilitating Muslim integration in the United States. "In the U.S., the society view religion and religious people as an asset," he said.

Jassemm used his own experience to illustrate the point: "I feel that I am no different than anyone else. In fact, I feel that I have more at stake in this country, more than most of the other citizens. I have nine children, aged 1 year to 26 years, all of them Americans, and all Muslims, and all part of the fabric of this society. There is no contradiction in being American and Muslim. A good Muslim is a good citizen."

Life for Relief and Development, Jassemm's organization, was founded in 1992 by a group of Iraqi-American professionals and is dedicated to providing health, education, social and economic services to victims of hunger, natural disasters, wars and other catastrophes. To learn more about its mission and humanitarian assistance visit the LIFE Web site (<http://www.lifeusa.org/>).

(Continued on page 14)

American Popular Music Groups Enjoy Tours to Middle East, Africa

By Phillip Kurata
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Two American music groups, one playing hip-hop, the other Latin jazz, have returned to the United States enthusiastic about their one-month tours of the Middle East and Africa.

Ezra Greer, bassist for Opus Akoben Hip-Hop Ensemble, said he and his three fellow musicians were greeted by excited audiences and eager musicians at each stop on their tour through Bahrain, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

"The response everywhere we went was great," Greer said. "We performed with local musicians everywhere we went. In Egypt, we performed with the Nubian folklore group. We performed with musicians in Jordan. In Bahrain, we played with the leading producer of hip-hop. We traveled with him and his crew the whole week and that was nice."

He said Opus Akoben's concerts with instrumentalists and a singer in Saudi Arabia have led to the possibility of doing a joint recording. "It'll be a combination of their stuff and our stuff. It'll be a hybrid," Greer said.

One of the two Opus Akoben lyricists, Terrence "Sub-Z" Nicholson, said the high point of the tour for him came during the visit to the Palestinian Territories.

"I learned a lot from those people," he said. "Regardless of what sort of oppression is heaped on you, you still live your life. No one can take joy from you," he said.

Carl "Kokayi" Walker, the other lyricist for Opus Akoben, said the high point of the tour for him came in Saudi Arabia.



Opus Akoben Hip-Hop

"We had academics. We had imams, we had singers, and everybody got together and we had an open exchange and that was very nice," he said.

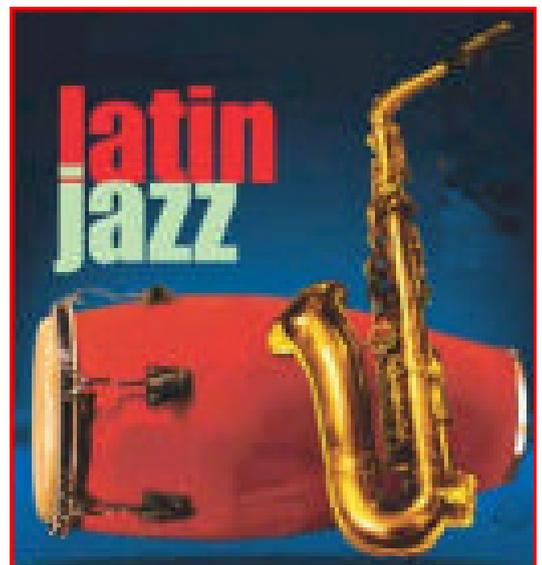
Walker said music had the effect of removing barriers and bringing people from different backgrounds together. "The thing about music is it goes through and makes everything a little more permeable. You can just squeeze through social barriers and political barriers and other barriers. Once you start playing music, it makes everything a little more permeable. You can just squeeze through those things," he said.

Greer said that a number of Middle Eastern countries, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt, have vibrant hip-hop scenes where singers perform in both English and Arabic. In Bahrain and Kuwait, hip-hop is voiced mainly in English, whereas in Egypt, the lyr-

ics are voiced mainly in Arabic, Greer said.

While Opus Akoben toured the Middle East in March, the Jazz Sabrosón Latin Quartet performed, taught, and learned while traveling through Congo, Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco and Mali. Both groups embarked on their tours as unofficial cultural diplomats for the U.S. State Department, which organized the tours with the help of Jazz at Lincoln Center, a not-for-profit arts organization dedicated to jazz. A joint concert at the American History Museum in Washington April 12 was the final event on their tours, which recently brought them back to the United States.

Steve Bloom, guitarist for Jazz Sabrosón, said in each country that the group visited they played



with local artists who made music with their traditional instruments. He said the tour through Africa was especially valuable for the drummers and percussion players.

(Continued on page 20)

Rice Warns of Stronger U.N. Action on Iranian Nuclear Program

By David Shelby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – If Iran does not respect the U.N. Security Council’s presidential statement calling for it to cease uranium enrichment activities by the end of the month, the council will have to consider stronger measures, according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Speaking to reporters at the State Department April 13, Rice said Iran continues to act in defiance of the international community’s demands. “When the Security Council reconvenes, there will have to be some consequence for that action and that defiance, and we will look at the full range of options available to the Security Council,” she added.

“One thing that the Security Council has that the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] does not have is the ability to compel, through Chapter 7 resolutions, member states of the U.N. to obey the will of the international system, Rice said. “And I’m certain that we’ll look at measures that could be taken to ensure that Iran knows that they really have no choice but to comply.”

The IAEA board of governors referred the Iranian nuclear issue to the Security Council in early March after determining that Tehran was not cooperating with IAEA efforts to verify the nature of Iran’s nuclear program. The Security Council issued a unanimous presidential statement March 29 calling on Iran to meet the demands of the IAEA within 30 days. (See related article

(<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/30-658572.html>.)

Rice indicated that the council would consider issuing a Chapter 7 resolution, which could include provisions for sanctions and the use of military force if Iran fails to comply with the council’s demands.



**Secretary Rice (R) shakes hands with Canadian Foreign Minister Peter Mackay at the State Department after the press conference, April 13
REUTERS/Yuri Gripas**

The secretary dismissed Iran’s efforts to frame the issue in terms of a right to develop civil nuclear power.

“No one questions the right of Iran to have civil nuclear power to increase its energy supply. But any civil nuclear technology would have to be one without the kind of proliferation risk,” she said.

Canadian Foreign Minister Peter MacKay, who met with Rice prior to the press availability, affirmed his government’s commitment to the international effort to bring Iran

into compliance with IAEA demands.

“Canada is in the position that we do support the international need to respond with one voice, the need to demonstrate to Iran that we very clearly want them to comply, upon pain of sanctions. If sanctions are necessary, we do believe, and I think the important message is, that there will be progressive response and progressive consequences,” he said.

Rice also spoke about the need to deploy a U.N. blue-hatted force in place of the African Union forces in the Darfur region of Sudan. She acknowledged that the government of Sudan is not in favor of a U.N. force, but she said “they have failed in their obligation to protect the people of Darfur, and they clearly need international help to do it.”

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick also addressed Darfur April 13 in a separate speech. Outlining the situation in Sudan for a Washington audience, he said that although there has been “some progress” in reducing mortality rates in Darfur, the danger levels there have started to rise. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=April&x=20060413165055WCyeroCO.7109033&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>.)

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Terrorists' Tactics Changing, Says FBI Official

By David Anthony Denny
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The terrorism paradigm has changed markedly from the days before the September 11, 2001, attacks, says John Miller, FBI assistant director for public affairs.

Terrorism training has changed from hands-on instruction at particular facilities to Internet-based correspondence courses, Miller said at a April 11 Foreign Press Center briefing.

Moreover, in pre-9/11 days, al-Qaida and other terrorist groups were hierarchical "in a kind of paramilitary way," Miller said. "There was a boss, in that case, Osama bin Laden; an 'under-boss,' [and] captains who ran crews of operators." From an investigator's standpoint, he said, the groups had a structure similar to that of an organized-crime family.

Since the defeat of Afghanistan's Taliban regime and the killing or capture of many al-Qaida leaders, that group's structure now has become "almost ... a movement or a

state of mind," Miller said.

Under the previous configuration, Miller said, a terrorist cell, to carry out a planned operation, would have gone to its controlling entity to explain the plot and request logistical help, training and money for things like false documents or bomb-making expertise, he said.

Now, Miller explained, these cells practice "a kind of do-it-yourself terrorism," where they use the Internet to learn how to conduct surveillance, plan a terrorist operation or make bombs and other devices.

"[W]e've gone from having a university for terrorism to having a correspondence course over a computer," he said.

Because of this shift, Miller said, sleeper cells -- small groups which before would have been planted in a country to await signals from headquarters to put a plan into action -- now could be described as "self-starter cells."

Such groups put themselves together, he said, based on mutual

agreement about using violence and fear to achieve political or social change, then raise their own money and plan and carry out their own operations.

"That is more realistic today than the concept of al-Qaida-run sleeper cells," Miller said.

Before working for the U.S. government, Miller spent 20 years as a television journalist for NBC and ABC. In 1998, while with ABC, he interviewed al-Qaida founder Osama bin Laden.

"[I]t makes me one of the few people in the FBI who's actually met with him among the very, very many who would very much like to," Miller said.

The transcript (<http://fpc.state.gov/fpc/64480.htm>) of Miller's remarks is available on the State Department Web site.

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Bush Announces Changes for Trade Representative, Budget Director . . .

(Continued from page 9)

he became known for working out compromises between Democrats and Republicans on difficult issues.

Often cited as one of his accomplishments at USTR is winning congressional approval of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which passed in the fractious House by only two votes.

Schwab started her career at USTR nearly 30 years ago as an agricultural trade negotiator and has served in trade-related positions in Congress and in the administration of the first President Bush as well as in the private sector.

She would face soon the challenge of pressing Congress to ap-

prove FTAs with Colombia, Peru and Oman. Democrats in Congress have expressed dismay with the labor provisions in the agreements.

Portman would face the daunting challenge of working with Congress to slow down surging federal government expenditures.

(Continued on page 20)

State Department Official Says Internet Aids Spread of Democracy

By Carol Walker
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- As the greatest purveyor of news and information in history, the Internet transcends borders, unites people and empowers the spread of democracy, said Ambassador David A. Gross, U.S. coordinator for international communications and information policy in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs at the Department of State.

But, he added, some countries are attempting to use technology to suppress dissent. "The restriction today [on Internet access] is government created rather than geographically created or even economically created," Gross told a Washington audience at the American Enterprise Institute on April 11.

Gross said that governments universally claim to have a desire to want more Internet access for their people and that the United States is working bilaterally with governments around the world on creating an environment to promote the construction of infrastructure and access to information.

"Governments themselves are responsible for control of commu-

nications including the Internet within their borders," Gross said, "but with control comes responsibility." Legitimate government tools to control the Internet are the rule of law and a progressive regulatory environment, he said.

Regulating the intermediary, however, said Alan Davidson, Washington policy counsel for Internet search engine Google, removes due process.



Davidson said his company, like Microsoft, Yahoo! and Cisco, abides by censorship laws when operating in countries that require them to do so. Google blocks prohibited terms in China and the company does not allow e-mail or blogs that could be viewed as political protest. Yahoo! and Cisco provided the technology to Chinese authorities that identified and

put behind bars Chinese journalist Shi Tao in 2005.

"The world is a better place when people have more access and more information," said Davidson. In that way, the Internet has been a revolutionary force, he said, but targeting Internet service providers to enforce a country's free speech restrictions raises concerns.

"The United States does a lot to foster the free flow of information," Gross said. He cited the Global Internet Freedom Task Force, an initiative to work with governments, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector to maximize access to information and minimize efforts to block content, suppress political debate on the Internet or use Internet data to track and prosecute legitimate dissidents. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2006/Feb/15-989025.html>).

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Muslim Outreach Key for Promoting Understanding, Integration . . .

(Continued from page 10)

A transcript (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Archive/2006/Apr/12-58352.html>) of the Jassemm webchat and information on upcoming webchats are available on USINFO's Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

For more information on Muslim integration (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Sep/07-600416.html>) in the United States, read about a September 2005 webchat with Ihsan Alkhateib, president of the Detroit chapter of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Com-

mittee. See also the publication, Muslim Life in America (<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/muslimlife/>).

To suggest a topic for future webchats, please e-mail iipchat@state.gov (<mailto:iipchat@state.gov>). ♦

Pulitzer Prizes Honor Achievement in Journalism, Creative Arts

By Michael Bandler
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- News coverage of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath in the U.S. Gulf Coast has brought Pulitzer Prizes to two newspapers in the ravaged region.

The prizes, which honor achievement in journalism and the arts, were created in the early 20th century in the will of Joseph Pulitzer, a leading publisher of the day. They are administered by Columbia University in New York and were announced April 17. Individual juries recommend three finalists in each category, and the Pulitzer Prize board -- composed of journalists and academics -- makes the final selection. In 2006 for the first time online submissions were eligible for awards in all categories.

The Times-Picayune of New Orleans and the Sun-Herald of Biloxi, Mississippi, shared the Pulitzer for public service reporting for their Hurricane Katrina coverage. The Times-Picayune also won an award for breaking news reporting on the storm. The offices and circulation areas of both papers were damaged by the storm, which hit their communities August 29, 2005. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Sep/02-225769.html>).

The Sun-Herald never missed an edition despite the devastation. The Times-Picayune published only online editions in the immediate aftermath of the storm, but resumed normal publication of print editions on September 2, 2005.

The announcement each April of the winners of the prestigious prizes in the arts sheds bright

lights on a number of writers and other artists who -- though lauded for their work -- are not necessarily familiar to a mass audience.

Geraldine Brooks, winner of the Pulitzer for fiction, received her honor for *March*, a novel that answers the question, "and then what," with respect to the family at the heart of Louisa May Alcott's classic *Little Women*. Formerly a foreign correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* in Bosnia, Somalia and the Middle East, Brooks has a preoccupation with war and its moral complexities. And so, she took the father from the family described in the book -- absent for most of Alcott's novel -- and followed him into battle during the Civil War.

David M. Oshinsky of the University of Texas, a leading historian of modern American politics and society, was awarded the Pulitzer for history for *Polio: An American Story*.

In *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, the prize winner for biography, journalist Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, professor of English and American history at Tufts University in Massachusetts, bring to life a still-controversial physicist who was at the heart of research into nuclear weapons and the campaign for nuclear disarmament.

Caroline Elkins, an assistant professor of history at Harvard Uni-

versity who concentrates on 20th-century colonial and post-colonial African history, won her 2006 Pulitzer in general nonfiction for her first book, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*.

The poetry prize was presented to Claudia Emerson, for *Late Wife*, an intensely personal volume in which a woman explores her leave-taking from an unhappy marriage and her re-emergence in a new relationship, enveloped in hope. The author of several previous volumes of verse, Emerson is on the English faculty of University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

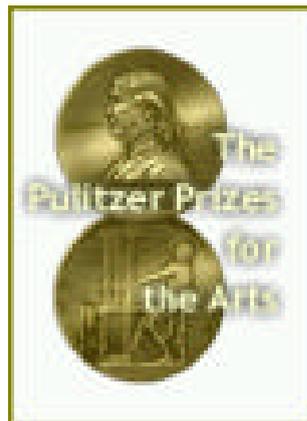
This year, the Pulitzer board chose not to award a prize in drama.

In music composition, it honored Yehudi Wyner for his piano concerto, *Chiavi in Mano*. This work by Wyner, whose five dozen compositions range from orchestral and chamber

pieces to liturgical settings and music for klezmer ensembles, was debuted by the Boston Symphony in 2005.

A complete listing (<http://www.pulitzer.org/>) of the winners and other information is available on the Pulitzer Prize Web site by clicking on 2006 on the time line at the top of the page.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦



Mammals Not Considered Bird Flu Carriers, U.N. Reports

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Domestic cats are not playing a significant role in the transmission of avian influenza, even though several feline cases of the disease have been reported.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) reported April 13 that epidemiological data show that domestic and wild birds remain the primary transmitters of the bird flu.

As many as 50 nondomestic bird species are vulnerable to infection, according to the statement, but “aquatic birds play a major role.”

In February, German health officials confirmed the H5N1 strain of avian flu as the cause of a cat's death on the Baltic Sea island of Ruegen. Authorities theorized that the cat had contracted the disease by eating an infected bird, thus suggesting that the virus might be introduced into the food chain, creating vulnerabilities for any variety of predatory animals, or humans in contact with them.

Earlier cases had introduced the possibility. Captive tigers at a Thailand zoo died in 2004, after being infected with H5N1 by sick birds that had been fed to the big cats. Cases of infected civet cats had been detected elsewhere in Asia.

Infection of the domestic cat in Germany drew a swift response

from the European Commission in early March.

“No H5N1 infection has ever occurred in humans due to animals other than domestic poultry,” according to a European Commission statement of March 1. “Current knowledge suggests that the disease in carnivores such as cats is a ‘cul de sac’ [dead end] of the infection that has not lead to an increase in the risk posed by this virus for animal or public health.”



However, the European Commission did recommend that pet owners take a

few precautions – prevent contact between wild birds and cats and dogs, and seek veterinary attention for any sick pet.

EGYPTIAN CASES INCREASE

Egypt's Ministry of Health reported its 12th case of human infection of the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus. An 18-year-old girl is hospitalized in stable condition after apparent infection through contact with diseased birds.

Egypt's Central Public Health Laboratory and the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 3, based in Cairo, Egypt, have verified the cases. Of these 12 bird flu cases to occur in the most populous nation of the Arab world, three patients have died, four remain hospitalized and five patients have recovered fully.

Not all the Egyptian cases have been included in the World Health Organization's official tally of human cases, pending further testing and confirmation. With inclusion of the Egyptian cases, the world occurrence of avian influenza in humans will exceed 200 cases with 110 deaths, occurring in nine nations.

GEOGRAPHIC REACH OF VIRUS EXPANDS

Since the beginning of 2006, the H5N1 virus has appeared in animals in steadily growing numbers of nations, almost 50 now, as tallied by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Most of the European nations reporting detection of the bird flu virus have found it in wild birds, not in domestic flocks. However, an OIE report of April 13 cites the destruction of almost 14,000 domestic birds on a German farm and French farmers also have spotted the birds in poultry.

Twenty-five European and Eurasian nations now have detected the virus, with four in Africa, five in the Near East, four in South Asia and the remainder in East Asia where this epidemic began more than two years ago.

For additional information on avian influenza and efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Ocean Agency Expands U.S. Tsunami Warning System

By Cheryl Pellerin
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – To expand the U.S. tsunami warning system, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has installed five deep-ocean assessment and reporting of tsunami (DART) buoy stations off the U.S. East and Gulf coasts and the Caribbean.

The latest buoy station, off the coast of Louisiana, joins stations off South Carolina and Florida and two off Puerto Rico.

"These buoys are a first line of defense in providing citizens of the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf regions with a comprehensive tsunami warning system," said NOAA Administrator Conrad Lautenbacher.

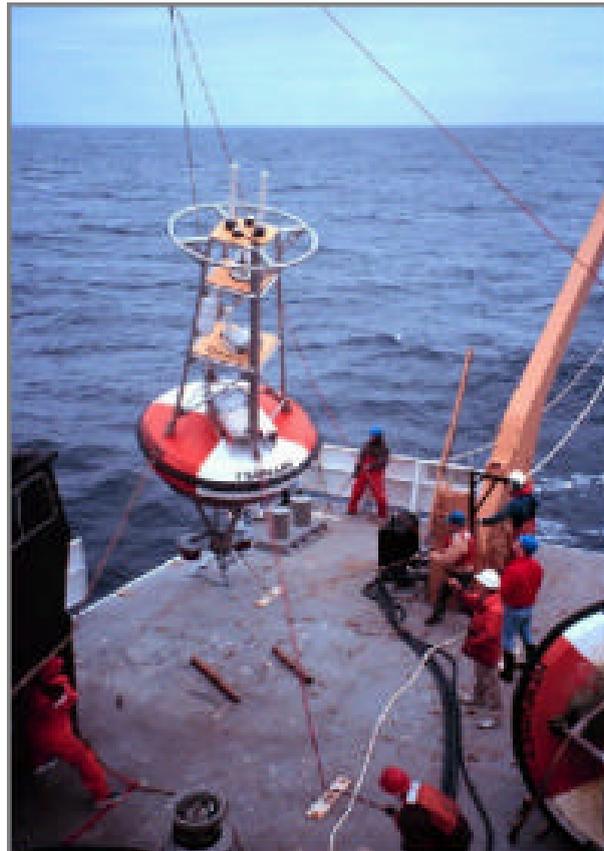
"The DART stations are an advanced technology," he added, that will help protect densely populated tourist destinations in the regions and protect their economic resources.

NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (PMEL) in Seattle designed and built the DART system to provide real-time tsunami detection as waves travel across the open ocean. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Dec/27-99050.html>).

TSUNAMI DETECTION

The newly installed stations, called DART II, are a more robust

design than previously installed stations. DART II stations are equipped with advanced two-way satellite communications that let forecasters receive and retrieve critical data, NOAA said.



Tsunami buoy being deployed in the Pacific Ocean from the NOAA ship Ronald H. Brown. [Click here for high resolution version, which is a large file.](#) Photo credit "NOAA."

The agency expects the network to total 39 DART II buoy stations by 2008 – 32 in the Pacific and seven in the Atlantic Basin.

NOAA received more than \$17 million in supplemental funding in fiscal year 2005 and almost \$9.7 million in fiscal year 2006 to expand the U.S. tsunami warning system.

Since receiving the funding, NOAA's tsunami warning centers have expanded their services to provide tsunami watches and warnings to the entire U.S. Atlantic Coast, Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Eastern Canada.

These regions now can receive tsunami warnings and watches through NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards and the Emergency Alert System, just as they would be notified of tornadoes, flooding or other hazards.

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL OUTREACH

Internationally, through the U.S. Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System program, U.S. agencies will spend \$16.6 million over two years to help develop early warning capabilities for tsunamis and other hazards in the Indian Ocean, and support the International Oceanographic Commission in developing an international warning system for 16 countries.

Until early warning systems are complete for the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, NOAA, along with the Japan Meteorological Agency, is providing interim warning guidance from its Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii.

Currently, in addition to the five new DART buoys, NOAA has 11 DART buoys in the Pacific Ocean – 10 operated by NOAA, one by

(Continued on page 18)

Ocean Agency Expands U.S. Tsunami Warning System . . .

(Continued from page 17)

Chile -- and the agency plans to contribute two DART buoys to the Indian Ocean early warning system.

NOAA has made designs and documentation for the deep-ocean buoys freely available on its Web site to any interested nation or company, and PMEL Director Eddie Bernard helped design a system of 23 deep-ocean buoys that could become one part of a complete Indian Ocean early warning system.

Additional information is available on the U.S. government Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (<http://www.iotws.org/>) Web site.

SUNAMI READY

The DART network is just one component of a comprehensive tsunami warning system.

"We have made important strides in enhancing our communication networks so East Coast residents and visitors can receive tsunami watches and warnings," Lautenbacher said.

The work, he said, includes upgrading NOAA's network of tide stations, working to staff the tsunami warning centers around the clock, producing forecast models for at-risk communities, transfer-

ring technology from research to operations and providing public education.

NOAA's effort to help communities prepare for tsunami and other weather events, called the TsunamiReady program, is designed to educate local emergency management officials and their constituents and promote a well-designed tsunami emergency response plan for each community.

TsunamiReady promotes tsunami hazard preparedness as a collaboration among federal, state, and local emergency management agencies, and NOAA is working to transfer the program to other nations at risk.

SYSTEM OF SYSTEMS

In President Bush's proposed 2007 budget, the administration is requesting \$21 million to strengthen the U.S. tsunami-warning program.

"Maintaining and upgrading the DART network and all components of the warning system is an ongoing effort," Lautenbacher said.

"We are already investigating new technologies to build an all hazards warning capability as part of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems [GEOSS]," he

added.

The 61-nation, U.S.-led GEOSS is a system-in-development for monitoring the Earth that seeks to integrate the world's widely distributed Earth-observing networks of surface-based, airborne and space-based environmental monitoring instruments.

Such a system will help mitigate the impact of tsunami and other disasters, forecast weather months in advance and more effectively predict climate change, El Niño weather patterns, drought, malaria outbreaks and other global changes.

The intergovernmental ad hoc Group on Earth Observations has developed the framework of a 10-year GEOSS implementation plan whose work begins this year.

A map of DART locations (<http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/dart.shtml>) and information on tsunami (<http://www.noaa.gov/tsunamis.html>) are available on the NOAA Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

NASA Releases First Mars Images from Two Orbiter Cameras

Washington – Researchers released the first Mars images April 13 from two of three science cameras on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter.

The orbiter launched August 11, 2005, and achieved orbit on March 10. Its mission is collecting data to understand the planet's water riddles and advance exploration of the mysterious Red Planet. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Aug/11-84426.html>)).

Images taken by the orbiter's Context Camera and Mars Color Imager during the first tests of the instruments in planetary orbit confirm the cameras' performance capability even though the test images were taken from nearly 10 times as far from the planet as the spacecraft will be when it achieves the intended orbit, according to an April 13 NASA press release.

Test images from the third camera of the science payload were released March 24. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Mar/28-930144.html>)).

"The test images show that both cameras will meet or exceed their performance requirements once they're in the low-altitude science orbit," said Michael Malin, team leader for the Context Camera and principal investigator for the Mars Color Imager.

"We're looking forward to that time with great anticipation," he added.

The cameras took the test images two weeks after the orbiter's March 10 arrival at Mars and before the start of "aerobraking," a process of reshaping the orbit by



First Context Camera Image of Mars (04/13/06)



View of Argyre Basin from Test of Mars Color Image (04/13/06)



Perspective View of HiRISE First Image (04/07/06)

using controlled contact with the Mars atmosphere.

This week, the spacecraft is dipping into Mars' upper atmosphere as it approaches the altitude range that it will use for shrinking its orbit gradually over the next six

months. The orbiter now is flying in very elongated loops around Mars. Each circuit lasts about 35 hours and takes the spacecraft about 43,000 kilometers away from the planet before swinging back in close.

On April 12, a short burn of intermediate-sized thrusters while the orbiter was at the most distant point nudged the spacecraft to pass from about 112 kilometers to within 107 kilometers of Mars' surface.

"This brings us well into Mars' upper atmosphere for the drag pass," said Deputy Mission Manager Dan Johnston of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, "and will enable the mission to start reducing the orbit to its final science altitude."

After hundreds of passes through the upper atmosphere, the drag gradually will reduce the far point of the orbit until the spacecraft establishes a nearly circular orbit every two hours. Once the spacecraft gets into the proper orbit for its primary science phase, the six science instruments on board will begin their systematic examination of Mars.

The new test images (<http://www.nasa.gov/mro>) and mission updates are available on the NASA Web site, as is the full text (http://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/2006/apr/HQ_06184_mars_orbiting_camera.html) of the press release.

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Bush Announces Changes for Trade Representative, Budget Director . . .

(Continued from page 13)

"I will work closely with the Congress on a bipartisan basis to prioritize essential spending that meets our national priorities while reducing spending elsewhere," Portman said in his White House remarks.

"To accomplish our shared goal of deficit reduction," he said, "Congress and the administration must also work together on earmark reform, on greater transparency in budgeting, a workable line-item veto, and addressing the unsustainable growth in entitlement spending."

Earmarks are provisions in spending bills aimed at benefiting a narrow group, often a business or industry in a congressman's district. A line-item veto would let the president delete such individual expenditures; now the president can choose only to sign or veto an entire spending bill.

Entitlement spending, including the Social Security pension system and Medicare health program for the elderly, increases automatically every year without yearly consideration by Congress.

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/20060418-1.html>) of the president's announcement can be accessed at the White House Web site.

For information on U.S. trade policy, see USA and the WTO (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/WTO.html).

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American Popular Music Groups Enjoy Tours to Middle East, Africa . . .

(Continued from page 11)

"For us, it was very important to learn about the roots of music. For the drummers and percussion, I mean, everywhere we went, that was the roots of everything we played," Bloom said. "I hope to be able to integrate some of the music I heard into my own music," he added.

He said one of the most memorable moments of the tour for him was a concert in Congo with two little boys and their father.

Miriam Sullivan, the bassist of the Jazz Sabrosón quartet, said that the musical tour took them to a village in Congo to which few outsiders ever have been.

"We went to a village. Tony [De Vivo], our drummer, asked one of

the students in a workshop to make him some drums. So, we had to pick the drums up. We went to a village, and the people there were saying, 'who is this?' 'What do you guys want?' They were curious. For me, as an African American, I saw my mom, my aunt, my sister, my brother. It was a beautiful experience," Sullivan said.

Opus Akoben Hip-Hop Ensemble and Jazz Sabrosón Latin Quartet are two of eight American musical groups that the U.S. State Department sent on overseas tours in the past year as part of a program called "The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad." The eight groups visited more than 30 countries.

Alina Romanowski, deputy assistant secretary of state for profes-

sional and cultural exchanges, said that hip-hop groups were brought into the mix of musical ambassadors for the first time during the past year.

"We've introduced hip-hop for the first time this year. It appeals to a younger group of people. Hip-hop is an interesting new genre to appreciate and understand. This has been really good to be able to engage directly with different parts of the population that are quite different," she said.

Additional information (http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/culture/american_music.htm) on the Rhythm Road program is available on the State Department Web site. ♦